

REMARKS

In the outstanding Office action, the examiner has rejected claims 17-38 (all the claims) as being indefinite under 35 USC § 112, second paragraph, and has also rejected all the claims as being anticipated, under 35 USC § 102 (b) by U.S. Patent No. 2,881,995 to Neher (Neher).

The above requested amendments to the claims are believed to render all the claims definite, and therefore the objection on this basis is believed to be overcome. Specifically, claim 17 now recites a decoupler for an actuator, and new claim 39 corresponds to claim 17, but recites a decoupler device for an electric motor.

The examiner's objection, at paragraph 4 of the Office action, to the use of the term "function housing" is not understood as this term is unambiguously used in the specification, for example, at page 6, lines 10-15. The actuator drives a separate device (such as a blower) having a housing. The device driven is irrelevant to the invention claimed, and is therefore referred to as a function unit, having a function housing.

The objection to the term "support shoulders" is also not believed to be justified. These shoulders (24, 25, 26) are illustrated in the drawings and described in the specification; see for example, page 7, lines 14 through page 9, line 5. It is therefore requested that the objection to these terms be withdrawn.

Editorial amendments have been made to claim 19, 21, 23, 24, 30, 34, 35, and 37 to more closely conform these claims to conventional U.S. claim format and to avoid any possible indefiniteness.

The rejection of the claims as being anticipated by Neher is not believed to be justified and is therefore respectfully traversed. In this regard, the language of claim 17 has been amended to more clearly require the securing element (19) to be disposed to extend between and engage at least two sets of decoupling elements (14, 15), with the actuator engaging the securing element.

The Neher patent discloses a decoupling device with one-part or multi-part brackets connected to a function housing (fan housing 3) and which might be said to at least partially encompass the electric drive motor. One-piece molded rubber decoupling elements 11 are positioned between the brackets and an equal number of support arms connected to the drive motor.

The support arms 6 of Neher engage the coupling elements in a necked-down section between two ball-like ends which engage the bracket, and all vibration loads are transmitted between the bracket and support arms through this necked-down section.

By contrast, applicants' decoupling device, as defined in the claim, employs separate groups of decoupling elements, each group consisting of a plurality of elastic decoupling devices between which groups a retaining element is located. The retaining element engages and supports the actuator through the opposing

groups of elastic decoupling elements. This arrangement applies compression or shear loads only to damp vibration of the actuator.

While applicants disclose and describe an embodiment in which two decoupling elements are joined by a coupling element, the specification makes it clear that the connecting element is for convenience of handling and installing only. The connecting element is not intended to carry any loads or to damp vibrations, and the decoupling elements joined act independently when installed in the manner recited in the claims, as amended.

While shoulders, or their equivalent, are inherently required to engage the decoupling elements of decoupling devices of this type, it is submitted that applicant is entitled to recite the specific arrangements of the shoulders in the novel combination of claims 18 and 19 with the multiple groups of decoupling elements as recited in the parent claim.

With regard to claim 20, it is respectfully submitted that Neher does not disclose decoupling elements disposed in pairs. Neher discloses only integral, one-piece decoupling elements which inherently function in a manner different from applicant's claimed decoupling elements which are disposed in pairs.

It is also submitted that Neher does not disclose or suggest separate decoupling elements connected in pairs by an intermediary piece as recited in claim 22. As pointed out above, Neher discloses only integral, one-piece decoupling elements in which vibration loads are carried intermediate its enlarged ball-like end

portions. The intermediary piece, or connecting member of applicant's claimed device serves only to connect two decoupling elements for purposes of handling and assembling and serve no decoupling function.

Claim 27 has been rewritten in independent form as new claim 40, and claims 28-31 now depend, directly or indirectly, from claim 40. With regard to these claims, Neher does not disclose or suggest the claimed oblique orientation of the decoupling elements relative to the rotation axis of the actuator. While the orientation of Neher's decoupling elements is not discussed in the specification, the drawings clearly show the axis of the individual coupling elements to be disposed perpendicular to the axis of rotation of the motor. The oblique orientation, required by claims 40 and 28-31, is particularly advantageous in that it is capable of absorbing strong forces and damping vibrations in the tangential direction. Vibration in both the axial and radial direction is damped by elastic compression of the decoupling elements, resulting in good resistance to shaking.

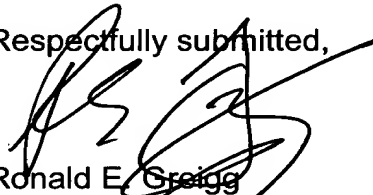
With regard to claims 32 and 33, Neher discloses only one-piece decoupling elements; they are not disposed either in pairs or one above the other.

Claims 21, 23-26 and 34-38 depend, either directly or indirectly, from claim 17 and therefore include the limitation to at least two sets of decoupling elements, with the securing element extending between and engaging the sets of decoupling elements. Since Neher does not disclose or suggest the use of multiple sets of decoupling elements, these claims are not anticipated or suggested by Neher.

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Amdt dated July 9, 2004
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In view of the above requested amendments to the claims, and of the comments contained herein, it is respectfully submitted that this application is now in condition for allowance. Accordingly, reconsideration and allowance is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,



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